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ABSTRACT

This document is a self-study report conducted by the Financial Aid/Veteran's Department of the Student Services Division of Rogue Community College (RCC) (Oregon). It is divided into five sections: unit description, mission and goals, analysis and appraisal, recommendations and actions taken, and contacts. Highlights include: (1) RCC has experienced a 24% increase in students since the early 1990s, and a 38% increase in Pell Grant recipients from 1997-1998 to 1999-2000; (2) for 1999-2000, total federal/state dollars awarded was \$6,583,405--\$3,126,929 for Pell Grants, \$2,687,601 for Stafford Loans, \$497,056 for Oregon Need Grants, \$167,819 for Federal Work Study, and \$104,000 for the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Program; (3) the Financial Aid Office's goals focus on assisting the Student Employment Office to establish equitable student employment opportunities in Jackson County, helping to recruit pre-entry populations and retain current students, improving services available to veteran students, and optimizing the use of available technology; (4) RCC's cohort loan-default rate in 1997-1998 was 10%, down from 38% a decade prior; and (5) according to a student satisfaction survey, 41% of respondents found the Financial Aid staff helpful, and 37% found them knowledgeable. This report contains seven charts. (EMH)

Rogue Community College Financial
Aid/Veteran's Department: Unit Self Study.

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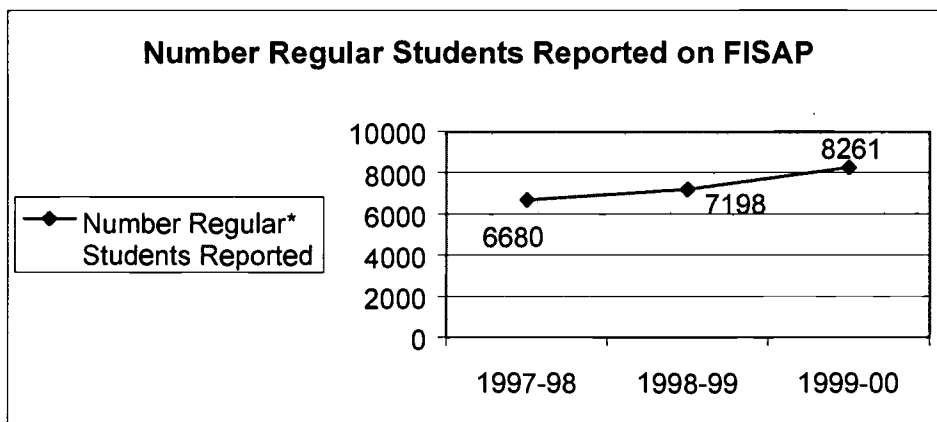
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**Financial Aid/Veteran's Department
Student Services Division
Rogue Community College**

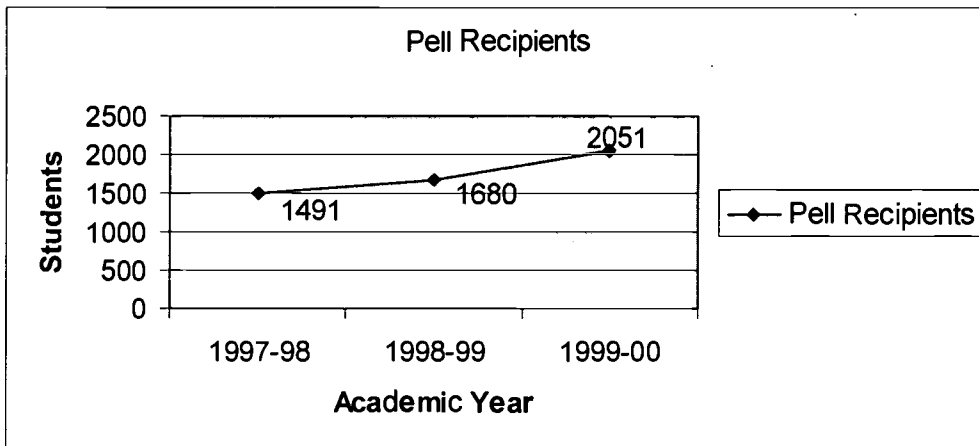
Unit Self Study

I. Unit Description

History: The Rogue Community College Financial Aid Department has provided federal and state student financial aid for the past 30 years. RCC also sponsors several scholarships through the RCC Foundation and delivers funds on behalf of third parties, including the Oregon Student Assistance Commission. We serve degree-seeking students enrolled in eligible programs in both Josephine and Jackson Counties. We have experienced rapid growth during the past 10 years, with a 23.67% percent increase in regular students, and a 37.56% increase in Pell recipients from 1997-98 to 1999-00.



* Regular Students are students who are enrolled in a degree, certificate or transfer program of study.



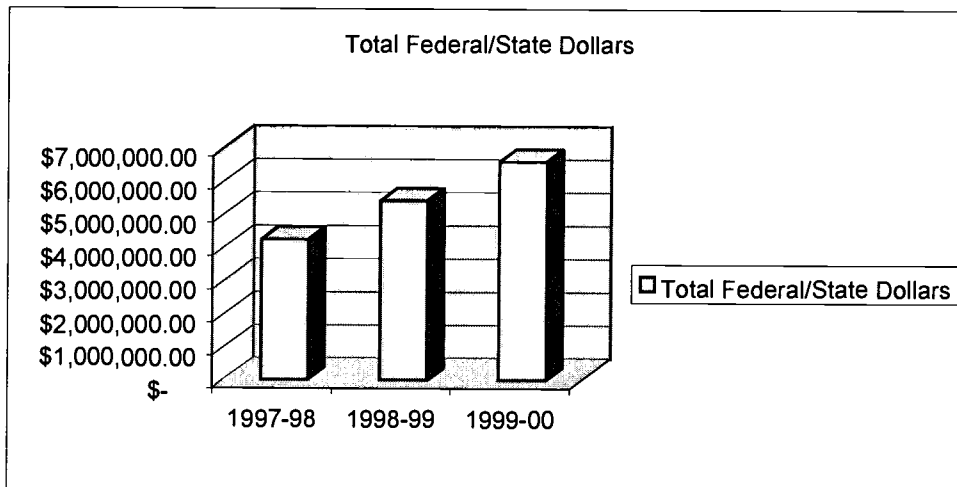
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RCC participates in the following programs:

- Federal Pell Grant Program
- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Program
- Federal Work Study Program
- Federal Stafford (subsidized and unsubsidized) Loan Program
- Oregon Need Grant Program
- Veteran's Educational Programs

Funding levels for Federal/State Awards for the past three years have increased by 55.33% overall, and are reflected below:

| | | <u>1997-98</u> | | <u>1998-99</u> | | <u>1999-2000</u> |
|--------------------------------------|----|---------------------|----|---------------------|----|---------------------|
| Pell Grant Dollars Awarded | \$ | 2,096,982.00 | \$ | 2,613,541.00 | \$ | 3,126,929.00 |
| Stafford Loan Dollars Awarded | \$ | 1,598,313.00 | \$ | 2,237,274.00 | \$ | 2,687,601.00 |
| Federal SEOG | \$ | 107,193.00 | \$ | 106,500.00 | \$ | 104,000.00 |
| Federal Work Study | \$ | 106,906.00 | \$ | 103,547.00 | \$ | 167,819.00 |
| Oregon Need Grant | \$ | 328,878.00 | \$ | 343,512.00 | \$ | 497,056.00 |
| | | | | | | |
| Total Federal/State Dollars | \$ | <u>4,238,272.00</u> | \$ | <u>5,404,374.00</u> | \$ | <u>6,583,405.00</u> |



A centralized administration federal financial aid program is maintained on the Redwood Campus. Financial Aid Service counters are located in the Wiseman Center on the Redwood campus and in the Wards Building on the Riverside campus. Staff, at all three locations, has access to the same in-house software and student databases via WAN connectivity. Student files are maintained in an imaged format using a document imaging system. Financial Aid Advisors at the service counters scan incoming documents as they are received from the students. Mail is scanned in the Josephine Building. RCC invented an "electronic inbox" system where student files can be placed in an "inbox" of a Financial Aid Department staff member with the reason and date of placement.

Financial Aid Department Staff

Shirlee Willis-Haslip, Associate Dean of Student Services (and Director of FA), RVC

Anna Manley, Assistant Director RWC

April Brimelow, Financial Aid Advisor RVC

Ronald Coffman, Financial Aid Advisor RWC

Carmela DiLeva, Financial Aid Advisor RVC/RWC

Leslie Hall, Financial Specialist

Brenda Bridges, Financial Aid Specialist

Shauna Law, Financial Aid Specialist

Rita Rice, Financial Aid Specialist

Sue Woods, Financial Aid Specialist

Barb Stokes, Veterans, Advisor/Financial Aid Clerk (now part-time)

Nancy Higinbotham, Veterans Advisor/Financial Aid Clerk, RVC/RWC

II. Mission and Goals

Our mission is to provide educational funding to all qualified students pursuing eligible programs in a timely, empathetic and sensitive manner. We are empathetic and responsive to student needs. We strive to simplify complex financial aid processes and personalize them to the individual.

Our goal is to ensure that all students understand that financial aid is available and how to apply. We strive to help students through the complex application and award process, and ensure that they understand the Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements for maintaining their aid eligibility from term to term. We assist in providing the means for life changes to occur.

Financial Aid/Veterans

Goals

Financial Aid Office 2000-2001.

1. Student Employment

Our goal is to assist and encourage the Student Employment Office in establishing equitable student employment opportunities in Jackson County. In 2000-2001, RCC has a 54% increase in federal work study positions available to students at the Riverside Campus.

2. Student Access

The Financial Aid Office will assist in the recruitment of pre-entry populations and the retention of current students.

The Financial Aid department will increase and improve services available to veteran students at the Riverside Campus.

3. Technology

The Financial Aid department continues to maximize its efficiency by using available technology. Our "paperless office" is efficient and effective as currently measured by fewer processing staff responsible for a greater student workload. We encourage staff productivity and accuracy, while maintaining job satisfaction and well-being.

With the implementation of Internet and telephone registration systems, the Financial Aid Department will accommodate the needs of these students using electronic access systems.

Objectives

1. Before 1999-2000, there were no work-study positions at RVC. We will help distribute FWS opportunities more equitably by creating at least 8 new student assistant positions in the new Wards building at RVC. 28 new FWS allocations have been added at RVC for 2000-2001.

2. The Financial Aid department believes that the best way to help with recruitment and retention is to maintain a quick turn-around time from application to award, and to provide excellent customer service to those who need it. We experienced a 26% increase in applications from 97-98 to 99-00, and a 54% increase in actual federal and state dollars delivered to those applicants. We anticipate another 10% increase in student financial aid applications in 2000-2001. Our processes have continued to improve in order to accommodate this growth using existing staff. Financial aid applications are acknowledged and responded to within one day of receipt. Awards are packaged within an average of 3 to 4 weeks of receiving all the required documents from the student. We will measure customer service by using the results of the RCC student satisfaction survey and the ACT student opinion survey.

The Financial Aid department will participate in at least four high school parent night programs, and Financial Aid Advisors will be available to parents who need help completing aid applications for graduating seniors in our community.

Due to the projected retirement of our current Veterans Advisor in December of 2000, we plan to use salary savings to hire a full-time Veterans Advisor while retaining the retiring advisor 19 hours per week. This will allow for training and also expanded access to veterans in both counties.

3. Selected Financial Aid Specialists will telecommute beginning in September 2000. We will compare the number of files reviewed weekly/per staff this year, to the number completed the same week last year. We will also compare the sick leave days taken in the department from September 99-June 2000 to the number of days taken from September 2000-June 2001.

We will train student assistants to teach other students how to access their own financial aid information on the Web. 100% of our student borrowers will be able to complete loan applications and counseling processes on the web.

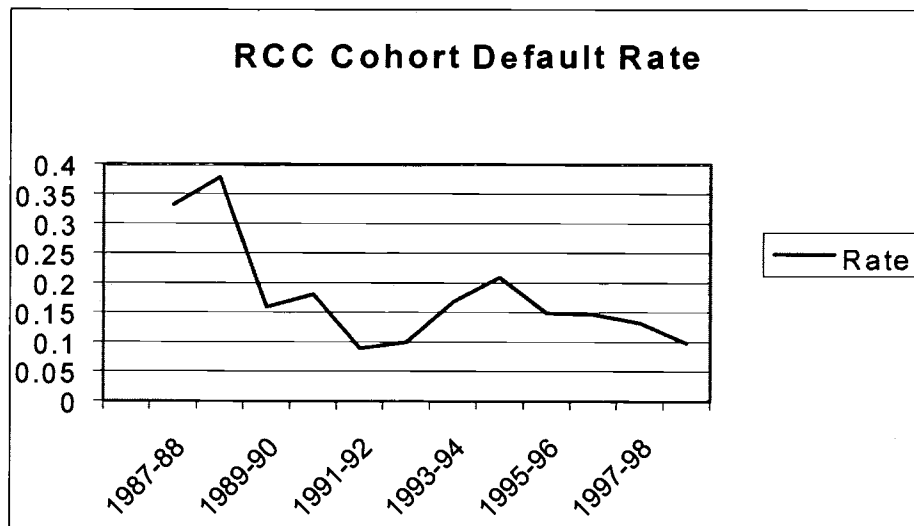
We envision a workforce not restrained by physical location. We are currently pioneering an experimental telecommuting project for our Financial Aid Specialists. Financial Aid review can be done from various locations. Efficiencies are gained by providing the opportunity for flexible work schedules and comfortable work conditions that are conducive to the type of analytical review required by these highly skilled staff. Eventually, the federal government will be making progress toward their "project EASI" implementation, which will change the future of the federal student financial aid funding process. We will continue to streamline the current financial aid process for RCC students.

III. Analysis and Appraisal

Cohort Default Rates: The U.S. Department of Education views our “cohort default rate” in the Federal Stafford Loan program as a measure of the college’s ability to administer federal student aid funds. The following shows our default rates since 1987, when the Department of Education first began collecting that data:

RCC Cohort Default Rates

| <u>Loan Year</u> | <u>Rate</u> | <u># Defaults</u> | <u># Into Repayment</u> |
|------------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| 1986-87 | 33.20% | 62 | 187 |
| 1987-88 | 37.80% | 123 | 325 |
| 1988-89 | 15.90% | 32 | 201 |
| 1989-90 | 18.10% | 21 | 116 |
| 1990-91 | 8.90% | 14 | 158 |
| 1991-92 | 10.00% | 12 | 120 |
| 1992-93 | 16.80% | 23 | 137 |
| 1993-94 | 20.90% | 29 | 139 |
| 1994-95 | 14.90% | 24 | 161 |
| 1995-96 | 14.70% | 25 | 170 |
| 1996-97 | 13.20% | 31 | 234 |
| 1997-98 | 9.80% | 23 | 234 |



Compliance Audits: The RCC Financial Aid Department is audited annually by Kuhns and Co., under the single audit review, as defined by the federal government. (Until 1999-2000 Coopers and Lybrandt performed our annual compliance audits.) RCC has a history of excellent audits.

State Program Reviews: The Oregon Student Assistance Commission (formerly known as the Oregon State Scholarship Commission) audited RCC in 1998. Minor findings were quickly accommodated.

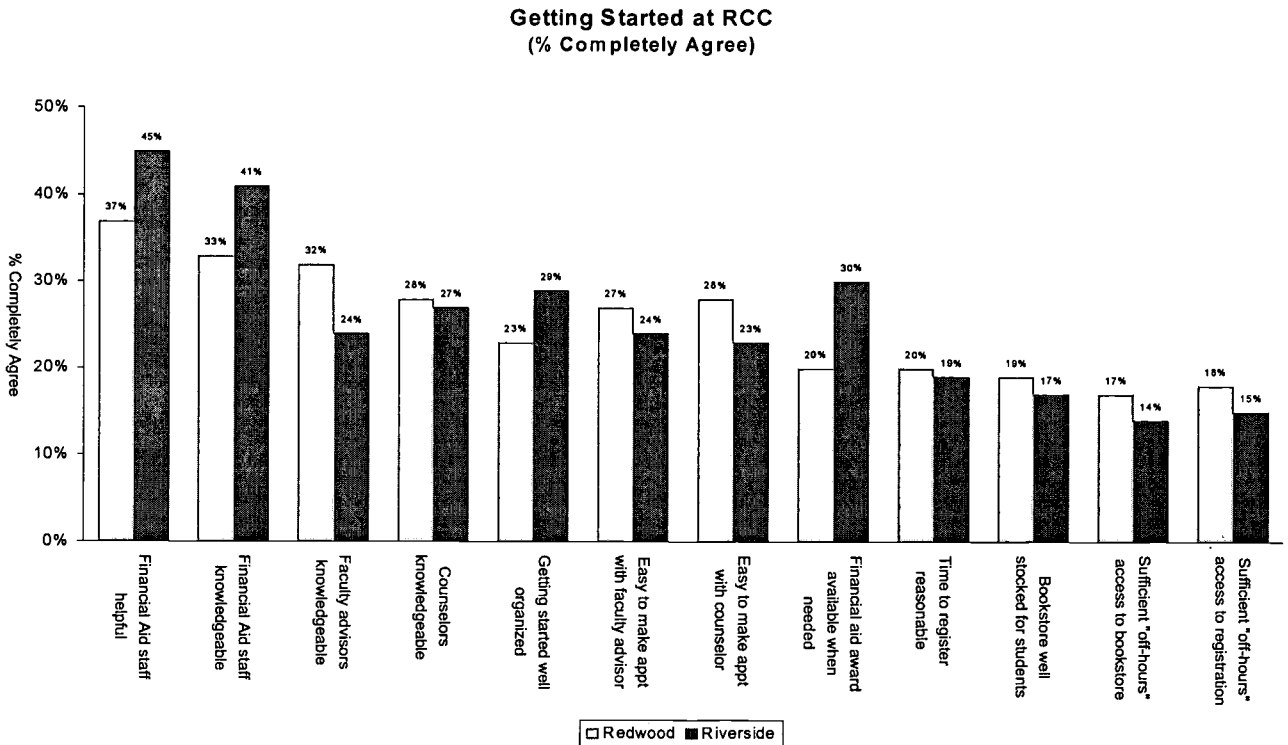
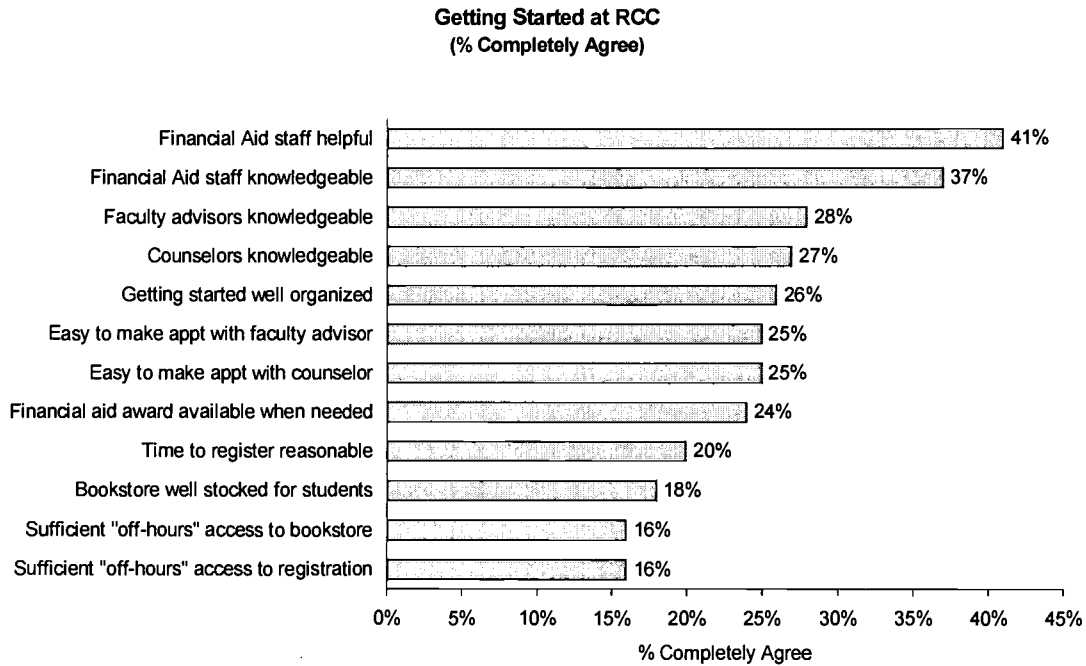
Federal Program Reviews: RCC underwent federal program review in 1988 and again in 1990. In both reviews, minor findings were quickly accommodated.

Veteran's Program Review and State Compliance Audit: RCC's Veteran's Office participates in a periodic program review by the Veteran's Administration.

All audit and program review details can be reviewed in the Financial Aid Office in Josephine Building of the Redwood Campus.

Student Satisfaction Measures: In addition to the formal audits, our students assess us in regard to our customer service. We use surveys to determine the how well students feel they are being served.

Taken from RCC's Annual Student Satisfaction Survey (Winter 2000):



Examples of changes made in accordance with student suggestions, taken from the "Recommendations of the RCC Student Satisfaction Survey:

- *Consider the adequacy of "off-hours" access to student services (such as financial aid, the bookstore, food service, and so on). Offer additional hours in the areas where there is need.*

The loan application process, although still not perfected, has been moved to an on-line format, allowing students to apply without coming on campus. Students can also access their own Financial Aid information 24 hours a day via the RCC Website, using their student ID and PIN number.

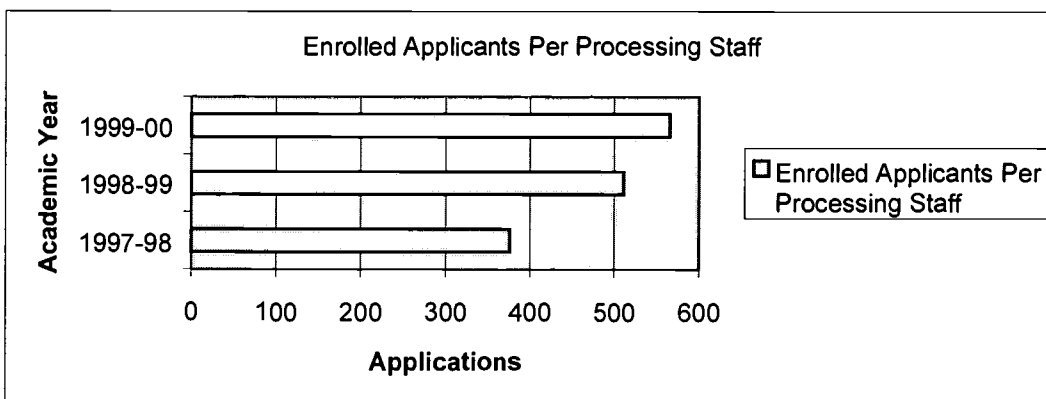
Financial Aid Department Strengths:

Integrity: Excellent audits; department integrity; long-term, well-trained staff; stability in program administration

Visionary: Ingenuity, creative, competent, genuine, collaborative

Service: Financial Aid Advisors are helpful and knowledgeable. While maintaining accuracy, Financial Aid Specialists have accommodated a 54% increase in financial aid applications in the past two years. (see charts above)

Efficiency: The Financial Aid Department has used technology over the past few years to increase the effectiveness of existing staff, rather than simply adding staff to our old processes.



Financial Aid Department Weaknesses:

Complexity: Continuous change, due to federal regulations, technology, and tremendous growth has challenged the staff to maintain their excellence. Our work is complex and difficult for students to understand. We strive to provide clear, informative, and updated information to our students.

Reorganization: Recent management reorganization (2000-2001) has resulted in personnel shifts that have challenged existing staff and slowed down processing.

IV. Recommendations and Actions Taken

How well do we do in accomplishing our mission, goals, and objectives?

According to student opinion, we are successful in making financial aid opportunities available and understandable to our students. Audit results (located in the Financial Aid Office in Josephine Building of the Redwood Campus) indicate that we are effective in accurately managing federal funds.

What will it take to reach these goals and objectives?

In order to address the complexity of our program administration, we make sure that every FA Department staff member has an opportunity to attend a financial aid training or conference each year. Federal, regional, and state conferences are offered annually. By sending teams of financial aid staff to these conferences, we are able to fully participate in the variety of workshops, sessions, and training opportunities. We immediately share the information learned with the rest of the team. Continued training is of utmost importance to our department.

Future Improvements: The Financial Aid Department is able to easily expand as necessary to other locations because of our paperless student record system. As the college grows, the FA Department is ready and able to respond quickly to the expansion needs of the college. We plan to maintain our centralized administration of the financial aid programs, and will soon need to add additional staff (such as clerical support, processing specialists, and advisors) to accommodate our rapid growth. We are committed to sufficient staffing and to providing staff with the hardware and software to perform their jobs effectively.

Beginning in 2000/01, a Veteran's Advisor will be stationed part-time at RVC, expanding access to Jackson county Veterans.

In 2001-2002, a new Financial Aid Director will be hired, along with an additional Financial Aid Specialist (if growth continues in the current pattern at RCC).

V: Contacts

Shirlee Willis-Haslip
Associate Dean of Student Services
541-245-7754 (RVC) 541-956-7103 (RWC)
shaslip@rogue.cc.or.us

Anna Manley
Assistant Director of Financial Aid
541-956-7104 (RWC)
amanley@rogue.cc.or.us



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